

SEA DYAK RELIGION.

II.

(*Continued from Journal No. 10 p. 243.*)



In a former number of the Straits Asiatic Journal (No. 10), some account was given of the religious ideas and customs of the Sea Dyaks of Sarawak ; of their belief in gods and evil spirits ; of their sacrifices and auguries. The subject is incomplete without a consideration of their burial rites, and their ideas of eschatology. These I now endeavour to supply.

But first a word about marriage. Birth is not celebrated with any religious ceremony, and marriage is a comparatively simple matter. The marriage ceremony consists principally in publicly fetching the bride from her father's to the bridegroom's house, but the Dyak, with his love of divination, could not allow such an occasion to pass without some attempt, or pretence, to penetrate the secrets of the future. When the bridal party are assembled in the bride's house, and the arrangements for the young couple talked over, a *pinang* (betel-nut) is split into seven pieces by some one supposed to be lucky in matrimonial affairs ; and these pieces, together with the other ingredients of the betel-nut mixture, are put in a little basket, which is bound round with red cloth and laid for a short time upon the open platform outside the verandah of the house : should the pieces of *pinang* by some mystic power increase in number, the marriage will be an unusually lucky one ; but should they decrease, it is a bad omen, and the marriage must be postponed, or relinquished altogether ; but, as matter of experience, they neither increase nor decrease ; and this is interpreted in the obvious sense of an ordinary marriage upon which the spirits have pronounced neither good nor bad. This action gives the name to the whole ceremony, which is called *Mlah** *pinang*—splitting the betel-nut. When the bride has

* *Bzlah*, Malay.—ED.

been brought to her future husband's house, a fowl is waved* over them, with a hastily muttered invocation for health and prosperity; and with this semi-sacrificial action the marriage is complete.

Death is much more involved with sacred observances. Although the Dyaks have something of the Moslem sentiment of fate, and commonly speak of the measure of a man's life, which once reached nothing can prolong, yet this does not seem to help them to a quiet submission to the inevitable; for, even when death is unmistakeably drawing near, they are eager in fruitless efforts of resistance, and the scene is generally one of tumultuous wailing. They will shout wildly to the medicine-man to recover the wandering spirit, and they will call out to the dying—"Come back; do not go with the spirits who are leading you astray to Hades. This is your country, and we are your friends." The word *pulai, pulai*, "return, return," is reiterated in piercing, piteous tones. Silence and reverent awe in the presence of death would be regarded as culpable callousness to the interests of a life trembling in the balance. And when actual dissolution is plainly imminent, they dress the person in the garments usually worn, and some few ornaments in addition, that the man may be fully equipped for the untried journey; and in violent demonstrations of grief, the women and younger people wait the end, or perhaps rush distractedly about in hopes of doing something to delay it. As soon as respiration has ceased, a wild outburst of wailing is heard from the women, which proclaims to all the village that life is extinct. The cessation of visible breathing is with the Dyak the cessation of life; he knows of no other way to distinguish a prolonged state of coma from death, and I have good reason to believe that sometimes bodies have been buried before they were corpses.

After death the body is lifted from the room to the *ruai*, or verandah, of the village-house; some rice is sprinkled upon the breast, and it is watched until burial by numerous relatives and friends who come to show their sympathy. The nearer connections of the deceased will probably be heard

* This *waving* of a sacrifice or offering is a noticeable feature in the practice of Hindu exorcists in India.—ED.

shouting out to some departed relative to come from Hades and take them away also, feeling at the moment that life is unbearable. At a burial once I saw a woman jump down into the grave, and stretch herself at full length upon the coffin loudly begging to be buried with her husband.

Among some tribes, there are professional wailers, nearly always women, who are hired to wail for the dead. One of these is now fetched, not only to lament the lost, but by her presence and incantation to assist the soul in its passage to Hades. Her song takes about twelve hours to sing, and the sum of it is this. She calls with tedious prolixity upon bird, beast and fish to go to Hades with a message, but in vain, for they cannot pass the boundary. She then summons the spirit of the winds to go, and—

“ Call the dead of ancient times,
 “ To fetch the laid out corpse under the crescent moon,
 “ Already arranged like the galaxy of the milky way.

“ To call those along ago bent double,
 “ To fetch the shroud of our friend below the moon,
 “ Already a heap like the hummock of the *rengguang*. (1)

“ To call the far away departed,
 “ To fetch the nailed coffin under the dawn of the rising sun,
 “ Already like the form of a skilled artisan’s chest.

“ To call the long departed ones,
 “ To fetch the *resak*-wood coffin below the brilliant moon,
 “ Already bound with golden bands.”

The Spirit of the Winds is reluctant at first ; but, at the solicitation of his wife, at length consents to do the wailer’s bidding. He speeds on his way through forests and plains, hills and valleys, rivers and ravines, until night comes on and he is tired and hungry, and stops to make a temporary resting place. After refreshing himself, he goes up a high tree to make sure of the proper road. “ He looks round, and all is dark and dim “ in the distance : he looks behind, and all is obscure and con-

(1) A crustacean which burrows in the earth.

“fused : he looks before him, and all is gloomy as night.” On all sides are roads, for the ways of the dead are seventy times seven. In his perplexity, he drops his human spirit form, and by a stroke of ghostly energy metamorphoses himself into rushing wind ; and soon makes known his presence in Hades by a furious tempest which sweeps everything before it, and rouses the inhabitants to enquire the cause of the unwonted commotion. They are told. They must go to the land of the living and fetch so and so and all his belongings. The dead rejoice at the summons, and without delay collect their friends, get into a boat and pull through the stygian waters ; and with such force does the boat plough the lake, that all the neighbouring fish die. Arrived at the landing place, they all make an eager rush into the house, “like soldiers who fly upon the “spoil ; and mad like wild pigs they seize the dead one.” The departed soul cries out in anguish at being thus violently carried off ; but long before the ghostly party has reached their abode, it becomes reconciled to its fate.

Thus sings the wailer, who has now done her work. She has conveyed the soul to its new home, which it would never reach, it is said, without her intervention ; but remain suspended somewhere, and find rest nowhere.

The climate necessitates a speedy interment ; but there is another reason for putting their dead quickly out of sight. After life is extinct, the body is no longer spoken of as a body or corpse ; it is an *antu*, a spirit ; and to have it long with them would, apart from sanitary considerations, expose them to sinister ghostly influences. Some time before daylight, a sufficient number of men take away the corpse wrapped in mats and secured with a light framework of wood ; and as it is being borne from the house, ashes are thrown after it, and a water-gourd is flung and broken on the floor. The graveyard is generally a small hill, or rising ground in the neighbourhood, as unkempt as the surrounding forest, overshadowed by towering trees, and full of an entangled undergrowth of grass, climbers and thorny *rotan*. On coming to the cemetery, the first thing done is to kill a fowl to propitiate the dread powers of Hades, to whom the ground is supposed to be devoted : and so strong is the need of this sacrifice felt, that no Dyak,

unenlightened by other principles, will dare touch the ground until it is made. Some now dig the grave; some cook a meal, which is afterwards eaten on the spot; whilst others get a large log of wood of the required length, split it into two, scoop out the inside sufficiently to admit the corpse, and thus make a rude coffin, the two parts of which, after receiving the body, are firmly lashed together with *rotan*. Sometimes, however, the coffin is made of planks before proceeding to the graveyard.

With the burial of the body is deposited *baiya*, that is, things given to the dead. Personal necessaries, like rice, plates, the betel-nut mixture, money and a few other articles are laid with the body in the ground; whilst spears, baskets, swords, weaving materials, pots, jars, gongs, etc., are put on the surface, the jars and gongs being broken to render them useless to any alien who may be inclined to sacrilegious depredations.* This *baiya*, little or much according to the wealth of the deceased, is regarded as a mark of affection, and to omit it is to fail in a natural duty. But the custom is really founded upon the belief that the things so bestowed are in some mystic way carried into the other world, and useful to the dead—their capital, in fact, to begin life with in the new stage of existence. And in cases where Dyaks are killed, or die by sickness, far away from home, the *baiya* is still deposited in the family burying-place. A burial without *baiya* is, in their phrase, the burial of a dog. A fence round the grave as a protection from ravages by wild pigs completes the interment.

There is a deeply-seated fear amongst Dyaks touching everything connected with death and burial rites. They have for instance, a lurking suspicion that the dead, having become the victims of the most terrible of all powers, may harbour envious feelings, and possibly follow the burying-party back to their homes with some evil intent. To prevent such mischief, some of them will make a notched stick-ladder,† and fix it upside

* Compare the observances of the Johor Jakuns, No. 7 of this Journal p. 97.—ED.

† The *tangga samangat* of the Johor Jakuns is said "to enable the spirit to leave the grave when required." Id.—ED.

down in the path near the cemetery to stop any departed spirit who may be starting on questionable wanderings; others plant bits of stick to imitate bamboo caltrops to lame their feet should they venture in pursuit, and so obstruct their advance.

Interment is the usual, but not universal, mode of disposing of the dead. *Manangs*, or medicine men, are suspended in trees in the cemetery; * and amongst the Balau tribe, children dying before dentition has developed enjoy the same distinction, having a jar for their coffin. Some eccentric individuals have a dislike to be put underground, and request that after death they may be laid upon an open platform in the cemetery; the result of which is that a most offensive exudation soon oozes from the badly made coffin; and after a year or two the posts become rotten, and the whole structure tumbles down, the coffin bursting in pieces, adding to the already large stock of exposed bones, which, with broken pots, jars, baskets, and other miscellaneous articles, swell the property of grim death, and make the place a vast charnel awesome and gloomy, well calculated to frighten the superstitious Dyak. Occasionally, a man has a fancy to have his body put on the top of a mountain, and the relatives probably dare not refuse to carry out the wish through fear of imaginary evil consequences. Among the Kayans, this burial above ground is the general practice, but they carry it out in a more substantial manner. The *baiya* is put in the coffin, but heads of slain enemies are hung

* Even among the Malays of the Peninsula, this practice of keeping the the body of a *pawang*, or medicine-man, above ground is not unknown. It exists also probably among the Sakai tribes. *Blian taun* is the Sakai name for the original tiger-spirit or man-tiger. A man who has a tiger-spirit as his familiar is a *pawang blian*, and may not be buried in the ordinary Malay way, but his body must be placed leaning against a *prah* tree, in order that the spirit may enter into another man.

In Perak, it is said that in the time of Sultan J'AFAR there was a *pawang* of the *hantu blian*, named *Alang Dewasa*. When he died (at Buluh Minyak in Ulu Perak) his relations would not permit his body to be set up against a tree, but buried it. Soon afterwards the ground was found disturbed, and since then *Alang Dewasa* has frequently appeared as a *hantu blian*, when invoked by *pawang*s of that class (See Journal No. 12, p 224). He comes down in the shape of a tiger, with one eye closed, the effect of an injury he received when buried, or when leaving the earth to assume his animal form.—ED.

up round the grave. Great warriors have been sometimes buried for a time and then exhumed, and their relics sacredly kept by their descendants in or near their houses, or it may be, on the spur of a neighbouring hill, with the object of securing the departed ancestor as a tutelary spirit.

Sea Dyaks do not consider burial as the last office which they can render to the dead, but follow them up with certain after-ministries of mixed affection and superstition. For three or four evenings after death, they light a fire somewhere outside the house for the use of the departed; for in Hades, they say, fire is not to be procured without paying for it. After burial, the nearest relation lives in strict seclusion and keeps a comparative fast until the observance called *pana* is made. A plate of rice with other eatables is taken by one of the neighbours to this chief mourner, and from this time he or she returns to the usual diet, and occupations of life. But this neighbourly act to the living is the least part of *pana*, amongst those tribes, at least where professional wailers exist. It is principally concerned with the dead, to whom by it food is supposed to be sent. Boiled rice and other things usually eaten with it, together with Dyak delicacies, are put together, and thrown through the opening at the back of the house, and the wailer is fetched to effect their transmission to Hades. She comes again to the house of mourning, not to lament over the dead—that is left for the relatives to do—but to call upon the adjutant bird, “the royal bird which fishes the waters all alone,” to do her bidding in conveying the articles of the *pana* to the other world. Among these are included with some pathos the sorrows and sighs of the living.

- “ To carry the *pana* of tears to the departed one
“ at the clear mouth of the Potatoe river.
- “ To carry deep sighs to those sunk out of view
“ in the land of the red ripe *rambutan*
- “ To carry pitying sobs to those who have fallen
“ unripe in the land of empty fruiting limes.”

The bird, says the song, speeds on its way, and after taking a rest on the *bacha* tree, which bears for flower one dark red bead, arrives in the region of the departed. There

they do not recognize the visitant, and inquire where it comes from and why: "Do you come to look at the widows? We have thirty and one; but only one is handsome. Do you come to seek after maidens? We have thirty and three; but only one is pretty." "No," says the bird, "we have widows and maidens plenty in the land of the living, all beautiful and admired of men." "What is that you have brought with you so securely covered up?" "Get a basin, and I will pour the contents of my burden into it." The basin is brought and receives the *pana*, and lo! the eatables and the tears and the sobs of the living mourners have become gold and silver and precious stones wondrously beautiful. But neither the men or the women know what they are; and mutual accusations of ignorance and stupidity are bandied about, and a noisy quarrel is the result. At this juncture, an ancient native of Hades appears, one, that is, who never was an inhabitant of this world;

Dara Rabai Gruda*

Dayang Sepang Kapaiya.

She chides their unseemly squabbling, and explains to them that the bird has come from the realms of the living with presents from their friends; whereupon they are seized with a passionate desire to return, but are told that this is impossible.

"The notched ladder is top downwards.

"Their eyes see crookedly.

"Their feet step the wrong way.

"Their speech is all upside down."

Their capacities are no longer adapted to the world they have left, and their destiny is irreversible; but still they urge their request to accompany the bird, and all the ingenuity of Hades is called in requisition to devise means of amusing the souls as yet unaccustomed to their new dwelling. Meanwhile, the bird takes its homeward flight. Thus far the wailer.

Until this *pana* is made, say the Dyaks who observe it, the soul is not thoroughly conscious that it has departed from the world, and Hades will not give it food or water; but after this, it is received as a regular denizen of deathland.

* *Garuda*, the eagle of Vishnu? See No. 7 of this Journal, p. 13.—ED.

There is a similar observance called *sumping*, which is carried out at a varying period after death. They take the symbols and trophies of a head-hunting raid, and the wailer is supposed to procure the services of the spirit of the winds to convey them to the dead, whose abode, before full of darkness and discomfort, is now, at sight of the trophies, filled with light; for they have the satisfaction of feeling that their relations have revenged upon others their own death; so henceforth they stand more freely upon their own footing.

This observance, which, according to ancient custom, could not be performed until the head of an enemy had been obtained, brings out the darker and fiercer side of the Dyak nature. They would fight with death if they could; but as they cannot, they rejoice in taking vengeance upon the living, whenever a chance of killing the enemies of their tribe offers itself; so as to be able to say to themselves: "My relatives have revenged my death. I am now on equal terms with the evil fate which has sent me hither." But in these times, when they live under a strong and civilized government, it is very seldom that this observance can be carried out in its fulness; and therefore it is either slurred over by some mild substitute, or omitted altogether.

But the great observance for the dead is the *Garwi antu*, Festival of Departed Spirits. No definite period is fixed for the celebration of it, and the time varies from one to three or four years. The preparation for it of food and drink and other things is carried on for weeks and even months; and sometimes it taxes very severely the resources of the Dyak. When all is ready, the whole neighbourhood for miles round is invited to partake of it. It is an opportunity for a general social gathering; it is a formal laying aside of mourning; above all, it is, in their minds, the execution of certain offices necessary for the final well-being of the dead.

But though it is a feast for the dead to which they are invoked and invited, yet they pretend to guard against any unorthodox and premature approach of the departed as full of uncanny influence. When the *tuak*, a drink brewed from rice, has been made, an earthenware potful of it is hung up before the door of the one room which each family of the

village house occupies, so as to attract the attention of any casual wanderer from Hades. Such a one is supposed to see the pot, and to go and regale himself from it, and be satisfied without going further: and thus his thoughts are pleasantly diverted from the inner seat of family life; the room—where, if permitted to enter, he might possibly, in revengeful spite, carry off some of the living circle.

The presence of the dead is desired, but only at the proper time and in the proper way. But how are they to come from Hades in the numbers desired? Nothing easier, thinks the Dyak, send a boat for them: So he despatches what is called the *lumpang*. A piece of bamboo in which some rice has been boiled is made into a tiny boat, which, by the aid of the wailer, who is again fetched, is sent to Hades. Actually, it is thrown away behind the house; spiritually, it is supposed by the incantation of the wailer to be transmitted to the unseen realm through the instrumentality of the king of all the fishes, who accomplishes the journey without much trouble. But in Hades he dare not ascend the great river of the dead beyond the first landing place, where he leaves the mystic craft together with food and drink. No sooner is this done than the stream becomes dammed up and overflows its banks. The curious boat is seen floating upon the swollen waters, but no one knows what it is. At length a water nymph rises out of the river, and tells them that the strange craft, which by this time has grown from the size of a toy to a mighty war-boat, has been sent by their living friends for their passage across the styx to partake of a final banquet. Great is the joy of Hades on discovering this.

“ Their shouts reach beyond the clouds.

“ They incite each other like men preparing the drums.

“ With joy they thump their breasts.

“ With gladness they slap their thighs.

“ We shall soon feast below the star-sprinkled heavens.

“ We shall soon eat where the roaring thunder falls.

“ We shall soon feed below the suspended moon.

“ We shall soon be on our way to visit the world, and march
“ to the feast.”

With this contrivance, the way is now open for the

departed to visit their old habitations as soon as the feast shall be ready and the final summons sent. Meanwhile preparations for the festival advance. Those tribes who erect ironwood memorial monuments at the graves get them put together. On the day of the feast, or may be the day before, the women weave with finely split bamboo small imitations of various articles of personal and domestic use, which are afterwards hung over the grave, that is, given to the dead. If it be a male for whom the feast is made, a bamboo gun, a shield, a war cap, a *sirih* bag and drinking vessel, etc. are woven: if a female, a loom, a fish basket, a winnowing fan, sunshade, and other things: if a child, bamboo toys of various descriptions.

The guests arrive during the day, and the feasting begins in the evening, and lasts all night. An offering of food to the dead is put outside at the entrance of the house. The wailer of course is present, and her office now is to invoke the spirit of the winds to invite the dead to come, and feast once more with the living; and she goes on to describe in song the whole imaginary circumstances—the coming of the dead from Hades, the feasting, and the return. She sings how numerous animals, one after another, and then *Salampandai*, maker of men, are called upon to go to Hades, but none have the capacity to undertake such a journey; how the spirit of the winds arrives in Hades, and urges the acceptance of the invitation by expatiating on the abundance and excellence of the food their relations have provided for them; how they and a great company of friends start, and make the journey hither in the boat before sent for them; how glad they are to see our earth and sky again, and to hear the many voices of the busy world; how they eat and drink, dance, and have a cock-fight with their living friends (for they have brought fighting cocks with them); how Hades is beaten (to make it victorious would be a bad omen); how they ask for their final share of the family property, and a division is made, but here again the dead get the worst of it, for in dividing the paddy, the living get the grain, the dead only the chest in which it is kept; so, the jars remain with the living, the stand only on which they are set being given to the dead; the weapons too are retained, whilst the sheaths go to Hades, etc., etc. In the very act of

professing to entertain their friends, they must cheat them for fear of conceding too much to Hades, and so hasten their own departure thither. After this pretended division of property, the children of deathland make their parting salutation with much affection and regret and go on their way. Such is the esoteric meaning of the festival according to the wailer's song.

The song makes the dead arrive about early dawn; and then occurs an action wherein the intercommunion of the dead and the living is supposed to be brought to a climax. A certain quantity of *tuak* has been reserved until now in a bamboo, as the peculiar portion of Hades, set apart for a sacred symposium between the dead and the living. It is now drunk by some old man renowned for bravery or riches, or other aged guest who is believed to possess a nature tough enough to encounter the risk of so near a contact with the shades of death. This "drinking the bamboo," as it is called, is an important part of the festival.

Earlier in the night comes the formal putting off of mourning. The nearest male relation is habited in an old waistcloth, or trousers: these are slit through and taken away, and the man assumes a better and finer garment; a bit of hair from each side of the head is cut off and thrown away. In case of female relations, some of the *rotan* rings which they wear round their waists are cut through and set aside; and they now resume the use of personal ornaments. This action is represented as a last farewell to the dead.

The morning after the feast, the last duty to the dead is fulfilled. The monument, if any, the bamboo imitation articles, the cast off garments, with food of all kinds are taken and arranged upon the grave. With this final equipment, the dead are said to relinquish all claims upon the living, and to go henceforward on their way, and to depend upon their own resources. But before the *Gawei antu* is made they are thought to carry on a system of secret depredations upon the eatables and drinkables of the living, in other words, to come for their share. When sitting down to his plate of rice, a Dyak will sometimes be seen to throw a little under the house as a portion for a departed one. And I have been told that in the morning the footprints of the dead are sometimes visible in

the paddy stores from which they have been supplying themselves under cover of darkness. They are driven to such little foraging expeditions, it is said, by the necessities of their position; for the powers of Hades look with contempt upon any who go thither insufficiently provisioned, and even quarrel with them. And worse still is said to happen if this feast be omitted altogether: the dead lose their personality, and are dissolved into primitive earth. Hence charity to the dead and motives of economy urge the Dyak to undertake the labour and expense of the *Gawei antu*, the preparation of which seriously hinders the farmwork, and diminishes the following year's crop of paddy.

According to ancient custom, this Feast of the Spirits could not be held until a new human head had been procured, but this ghastly, yet valued, ornament to the festival has now to be generally dispensed with.

Thus far I have, in the main, followed Dyak thought about death and the afterstate as it is embodied in their tribal ceremonies and songs; but as might be expected popular thought is not without its ideas and theories; and these supplement what has hitherto been said.

In the borderland, says the Dyak, between this world and the next, is situated the house of the Bird *bubut*, a bird here, a spirit there, covering his identity in human form. Every human spirit in the extremity of sickness comes to this place: if it goes up into the house, by the influence of the bird it returns to the body, which thereupon recovers; but if it avoids the house, as is more probable, because it is always in a filthy state of dirt and stench, then it is well on its way to the other world. There is, however, another chance for it at the "Bridge of Fear," a see-saw bridge stretching across the Styx, and difficult to pass over: if the soul makes the passage successfully, it is gone past recovery; if it falls into the water, the cold bath wakes it up to a sense of its real position, and determines it to retrace its steps.

After this, it seems, the soul has to pass the "Hill of Fire." Evil souls are compelled to go straight over the hill with scorching fire on every side, which nearly consumes them; but good ones are led by an easy path round the foot, and so

escape the pain and danger.* This is the only connection in which I have met with anything which suggests the idea of future retribution for wrong doing in this life.

Dyaks attribute to the dead a disposition of mixed good and evil towards the living, and so alternately fear and desire any imaginary contact with them. As has been said before, they do not speak of taking a "corpse" to the grave, but an *antu*, a spirit; as though the departed had already become a member of that class of capricious unseen beings which are believed to be inimical to men. They think the dead can rush from their secret habitations, and seize invisibly upon any one passing by the cemetery, which is, therefore, regarded as an awesome, dreaded place. But yet this fear does not obliterate affectionate regard, and many a grave is kept clean and tidy by the loving care of the living; the fear being united with the hope of good, as they fancy the dead may also have the will and the power to help them. I was once present at the death of an old man, when a woman came into the room, and begged him, insensible though he was, to accept a brass finger ring, shouting out to him as she offered it: "Here, grandfather, take this ring, and in Hades remember I am very poor, and send me some paddy medicine that I may get better harvests." Whether the request was granted, I never heard. Sometimes they seek communion with the dead by sleeping at their graves in hope of getting some benefit from them through dreams, or otherwise. A Dyak acquaintance of mine had made a good memorial covering over the grave of his mother of an unusual pattern, and soon fell ill, in consequence, some said, of this ghostly work. So he slept at her grave feeling sure she would help him in his need, but neither voice nor vision nor medicine came; and he was thoroughly disappointed. He said to me: "I have made a decent resting place for my mother, and now I am ill and ask her assistance, she pays no attention. I think she is very ungrateful."

* "According to the creed of the Badagas in Tamul India, the souls are obliged to pass by a column of fire which consumes the sinful, and it is only after perils that they reach the land of the blessed by a bridge of rope." PESCHEL, *Races of Man*, p. 284, quoting BAIERLEIN, *Nach und aus Indien*.—ED.

This belief in reciprocal good offices between the dead and the living comes out again in those cases where the remains of the dead are reverently preserved by the living. On every festival occasion, they are presented offerings of food, etc., in return for which these honoured dead are expected to confer substantial favours upon their living descendants.

Their notions of the relationship of this world to the next, and of the dead to the living, will be further illustrated by the story of *Kadawa*; which may also be taken as a specimen of their folklore.

KADAWA was a great cock-fighter, but had suffered successive defeats from his fellow Dyaks. Irritated at being beaten in a sport he so dearly loved, he started off to seek a cock of a particular white and red plumage, called *biring grunggang*, which he believed would bear down all others before it. But a chanticleer of this peculiar plumage was a "rara avis" among fowls; and village after village was visited, and neither for love or money could the coveted bird be got, for the simple reason that there were none. Nothing daunted, he started off again to go further afield, and determined not to return till he had succeeded in his quest. He travelled hither and thither in the land of the Dyaks until he knew not where he was, and at length arrived at the land of *Mandai idup*, the borderland between Hades and this world, the inhabitants of which can visit one or the other as they wish. Here a long village house appeared in sight. He went up the ladder into it; and to his astonishment it showed all the signs of being inhabited, even to the fires burning on the hearth and the sounds of surrounding voices; but not a person could be seen; so he shouted out: "Ho, where are you all?" Whereupon an unembodied voice answered: "Is that you, KADAWA? Sit down and eat *pinang* and *sirih*. What do you want?" "I am come to beg or buy a *biring grunggang*, fighting cock." There is not one to be had here; but if you "go on to the next village, you will find one." So KADAWA trudged on, greatly wondering at the strangeness of a place peopled by bodiless beings, talking working phantoms of men and women. Soon after, he came to a populous place, where many village-houses were clustered together—*Mandai mati*,

the first district of the land of the dead; but KADAWA knew it not for it had nothing to remind him of death; the people moved about, spoke and had the same form and feature as his own neighbours: moreover they recognized and called him by name. They offered to give him a *biring grunggang*, which he gladly accepted. Having now obtained his object, he was happy, and finding the people sociable and hospitable, he was in no hurry to return, but remained with his new-found friends more than a year, oblivious of home and its duties.

But what of his wife and child whom he had left behind in his house? She was grieved at his long absence, and at last resolved that he must be dead and she wept and bewailed him; and at length she died of sorrow.

The time came when the relations made the *Garwei antu* for her; and the wailer was bringing the company of guests from Hades to the feast. Just at that time KADAWA had determined upon returning, and was securing his fighting cock and buckling on his sword, when some one called to him to go on the platform in front of the house, and pointed out to him a procession marching along the hill opposite the house. KADAWA looked and saw in the middle of the long train his own wife; and it flashed upon him that his wife was dead and he himself within the confines of deathland. Without speaking a word he caught up his fighting cock, sword and spear and rushed to join his wife. She repelled him, but in vain. At length they came to the stygian lake and found a boat lying on the shore, into which they all hurried, trying to keep KADAWA out; but he vigorously persisted, and was allowed to embark. After paddling several hours the boat struck upon a rock, and would not move: all except KADAWA jumped out to pull her off, but she would not budge an inch. KADAWA was called upon by his wife to help; but he refused for fear of being left behind—says his wife: “Do you not know I am dead? What is the use of trying to follow me?” “Let me die also, I will not leave you.” “Very well,” replied his wife, “since you are resolved to come with me, when we get to the house, you will find some dried sugar cane over the fire place: eat that, and you will be able to bear me company.

“ Now get out, and help to pull the boat off the rock.” He jumped out, and as soon as his feet touched the rock, boat people and lake vanished, and he found himself standing at his own doorstep.

But no pleasure did his return bring him, for he found his friends making the last farewell feast for his wife. He neither ate nor drank nor shared in the festivities ; but kept in his own room till all was over when he thought of the sugar cane over the fireplace. He searched for it, but found nothing more than a roll of poisonous *tuba** root : again and again he looked but nothing else was there ; so he concluded that this was what his wife meant by the sugar cane. He spoke sorrowfully to his neighbours and told them he should not live long, and begged them to be kind to his orphan boy and give him his inheritance : then he returned to his room wrapped a blanket round him and laid himself on the floor chewed the fatal root and joined his wife in deathland.

I have thus traced the general belief of the Sarawak Sea Dyak about his future existence. There are however exceptions to it. Occasionally the idea of metempsychosis is met with. At one time the spirit of a man is said to have passed into an alligator ; at another into a snake, etc., the knowledge of it being always revealed by dreams. Sometimes a Dyak will deny the possibility of any future existence ; but only I think to serve the purpose of an argument. But these, wherever found, are deviations from the general belief.

But it is no gloomy Tartarus, nor is it any superior happy Elysium to which the Dyak looks forward ; but a simple prolongation of the present state of things in a new sphere. The dead are believed to build houses, make paddy farms, and go through all the drudgery of a labouring life, and to be subject to the same inequalities of condition and of fortune as the living are here. And as men helped each other in life, so death, they think, need not cut asunder the bond of mutual interchanges of kindly service ; they can assist the dead with food and other necessaries : and the dead can be equally generous in bestowing upon them medicines of magical virtue,

* *Cocculus indicus*.—ED.

amulets and talismans of all kinds to help them in the work of life. This sums up the meaning of their eschatological observances which perhaps exceed those of most other races of mankind.

But this future life does not, in their minds, extend to an immortality. Death is still the inevitable destiny. Some Dyaks say they have to die three times; others seven times; but all agree in the notion, that after having become degenerated by these successive dyings, they become practically annihilated by absorption into air and fog, or by a final dissolution into various jungle plants not recognized by any name. Maybe, they lack the mental capacity to imagine an endless state of liveable life.

J. PERHAM.
